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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report examines the extent to which women's and girls' access to and participation in formal and non-formal education and training translate into full employment and decent work. It provides recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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I. Introduction

1. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/15, the Commission on the Status of Women will consider at its fifty-fifth session as its priority theme "Access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work". In order to allow for an in-depth analysis of the theme, the present report examines the extent to which women's and girls' access to and participation in formal and non-formal education and training translate into full employment and decent work. Gender equality issues in science and technology, including science and technology education and employment, are addressed in a separate report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme (E/CN.6/2011/3). Both reports serve as inputs for the Commission's consideration of the priority theme.

2. The present report incorporates an analysis of contributions by Member States[1] on progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in national policies and programmes, and thus responds to Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9. It also draws on information and data from publications by United Nations entities, an online discussion[2] and other sources as indicated, and concludes with recommendations for future action for the consideration of the Commission on the Status of Women.

II. Background

3. The Beijing Platform for Action[3] highlighted education as a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace, and urged Governments to eliminate disparities between women and men in access to education and educational outcomes at all levels and in all forms of education, including primary, secondary and tertiary education, vocational training, adult literacy and lifelong learning, in line with the outcome of the 1990 World Conference on Education for All. At the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000, Governments called for equal access to education and the elimination of gender disparities in education, including vocational training, and science and technology. They highlighted the need to develop policies and programmes to enhance the employability of women and their access to quality jobs, through improving access to formal, non-formal and vocational training, lifelong learning and retraining and long-distance education. The importance of addressing gender stereotyping as one of the root causes of occupational segregation was also emphasized.

[1] Contributions were received from the Governments of Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Belarus, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, China, Cyprus, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, El Salvador, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Jamaica, Japan, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Zambia.

[2] See www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw55/onlinediscussion.html.

[3] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

4. In the Millennium Declaration (see General Assembly resolution 55/2), world leaders committed themselves to achieving gender equality in education by 2015. In 2000, the World Education Forum in Dakar set the six Education for All goals, two of which focus specifically on achieving gender equality in education. The Millennium Development Goals address gender equality and education in two of the eight goals. Goal 2 focuses on universal primary education, while one of the targets of Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment is the elimination of gender disparity in all levels of education.

5. The Commission on the Status of Women last considered education and training as a priority theme in 1997, and has repeatedly addressed critical aspects of women's and girls' access to and participation in education, training, science and technology, as well as access to decent work, in its deliberations and outcomes, including in its agreed conclusions of 2007 on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child (see E/2007/27/E/CN.6/2007/9, chap. I.A).

6. In December 2009, States members of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization adopted the Belém Framework for Action at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education, in which they committed themselves to prioritizing investment for women in lifelong learning and improving their access to and participation in adult learning and education programmes.

7. Women's and girls' access to and participation in education, training, science and technology and their access to full employment and decent work are also addressed in human rights instruments and their monitoring mechanisms. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women requires States parties to eliminate discrimination against women in education and employment. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights contains a specific provision on fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value for women. International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions of particular relevance to gender equality include the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) and the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156).

8. In its concluding observations, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regularly expresses concern about girls' high drop-out rates from school, especially at the secondary level, owing to early marriages, traditional sex role stereotypes, lack of means of transportation, indirect costs of education and involvement in economic activities, in particular among girls living in rural or remote areas and girls belonging to linguistic or ethnic minorities.

9. In June 2009, the International Labour Conference adopted a resolution entitled "Recovering from the Crisis: A Global Jobs Pact" to address the social and employment impact of the international financial and economic crisis.[4] Noting that the crisis should be viewed as an opportunity to shape new gender equality policy responses, the Conference also adopted comprehensive recommendations on gender equality in the world of work, including sections on employment, social protection,

[4] ILO, *Recovering from the Crisis: A Global Jobs Pact* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2009).

fundamental principles and rights at work, social dialogue and tripartism and the roles of Governments, employers' organizations, workers' organizations and ILO.[8]

III. Women's access to and participation in education and training[9]

Overview

10. Education is a key driver of economic growth and social change, and its importance for achieving gender equality is well recognized. Evidence from 24 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, reveals that the birth rate among girls with no education is over four times higher than that among girls with secondary education or higher.[7] Educational opportunities have expanded over the last decades, enabling a larger share of the world population to access formal education. The ratio of girls' to boys' enrolment has steadily improved, reaching 97 girls per 100 boys at primary level, 96 girls per 100 boys at secondary level and 108 women per 100 men at tertiary level in 2008.[8]

11. While substantial progress has been achieved, gaps remain in women's and girls' access to education. In 2007, 72 million children of primary-school age were out of school, 54 per cent of whom were girls.[9] Similarly, 54 per cent of the 71 million adolescents who were out of school in 2007 were girls.[10] In addition, out-of-school girls are less likely to ever go to school than boys. Women's and girls' access to post-primary education remains restricted in many parts of the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and Southern Asia.[11] In addition, gender disparities in terms of access and occupational segregation are often more pronounced in technical and vocational education than in general education.[7]

12. Global averages further mask the wide variations in participation rates in education both between and within countries. For example, more girls than boys are enrolled in higher education in the Commonwealth of Independent States, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Africa and South-East Asia, while girls' enrolment is much lower than boys' in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia.[11] In addition, there are disparities with regard to fields of study, as women and girls remain overrepresented in the humanities and social sciences and underrepresented in science and engineering.

[8] See ILO, Report of the Committee on Gender Equality, Provisional Record No. 13, International Labour Conference, 98th session, Geneva, 2009 (ILO document ILC98-PR13-2009-06-0323-1-En.doc), resolution concerning gender equality at the heart of decent work.

[9] Unless otherwise indicated, the information in sections III and IV of the report is derived from Member States' inputs (see note 1 above).

[7] World Bank, "Ready for work: increasing economic opportunity for adolescent girls and young women" (Washington, D.C., 2008).

[8] UNESCO, *Global Education Digest 2010*, available from www.uis.unesco.org, Publications.

[9] UNESCO, *Reaching the Marginalized*, Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010, available from www.uis.unesco.org, Publications.

[10] M. Bruneforth and P. Wallet, "Developing indicators to monitor out-of-school adolescents", background paper cited in *Reaching the Marginalized*, note 9 above.

[11] United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010* (New York, 2010).

13. Women comprise nearly two thirds of the world's 759 million illiterate adults.[12] Despite progress in female literacy rates in many regions, gender disparities persist in some regions, including the Arab States, South and West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, where female literacy rates are below 62 per cent.

14. While these statistics are useful in signalling changes over time, cross-national comparable sex-disaggregated data are needed to explore the underlying causes of inequalities, such as differences in dropout and completion rates, low school attendance and low participation by sex in certain subjects or fields of study, in order to formulate appropriate policy responses to address such inequalities.[5] The establishment of gender observatories, for example in Burkina Faso, can facilitate the collection of sex-disaggregated data to monitor and evaluate progress in this area.

15. While it is not yet clear what impact the financial and economic crisis will have on girls' education, the crisis has jeopardized social services in many countries, including the provision of education. For instance, the resources available for education in sub-Saharan Africa were estimated to decline by $4.6 billion a year on average in 2009 and 2010.[13] Experience from past crises suggests that the tendency to cut back public expenditures during times of financial and economic crisis and decreases in household incomes lead to withdrawal of girls from school (E/2010/4-E/CN.6/2010/2, para. 72).

Increasing access to education

16. The 15-year review of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action[14] and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly[15] showed that States have undertaken a wide range of actions to implement the strategic objectives for education and training at the national level, with substantial gains for women and girls particularly in relation to access (E/2010/4-E/CN.6/2010/2, para. 49).

17. Progress in narrowing gender gaps is particularly visible in countries that have undertaken reforms to address multiple forms of disadvantages girls face, including financial and cultural barriers.[12] Initiatives include recruiting female teachers, providing incentives for their deployment to rural areas, giving teachers gender-sensitization training and building satellite schools. A number of countries, including Cambodia, Canada, El Salvador and Germany have taken measures to mainstream gender perspectives in the education sector. The National Vocational and Technical Education Commission in Pakistan has developed a national skills strategy which mainstreams gender into technical education to improve access, equity and employability of women through skill development. States have been active in addressing girls' access to education in the framework of development cooperation. For instance, Belgium's and Japan's development assistance includes a

[12] *Reaching the Marginalized*, note 9 above, "Gender overview", paper prepared for Beijing + 15 consultation.

[13] UNESCO, *Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters*, Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2009, available from www.uis.unesco.org, Publications.

[14] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No.E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[15] Resolution S-23/2, annex and resolution S-23/3, annex.

focus on building schools, training teachers and assisting in curriculum development.

18. Poverty remains a key obstacle to girls' access to education. Girls' access to education can be particularly limited if they live in poverty, in rural areas or in urban slums, belong to a minority group, are affected by armed conflict or live with disabilities. In Yemen, girls' primary school enrolment was found to be lowest in the poorest and rural areas, where 70 per cent of out-of-school children were girls and 88 per cent lived in rural areas in 2005.[16] Data from 42 countries show that secondary-school-age girls from the poorest households are half as likely to go to school as girls from the wealthiest households.[17]

19. In the context of limited family resources, parents may favour educating boys over girls, as they may consider that any economic benefits of girls' education would be reaped by future in-laws or because they may be concerned that girls would not be able to find job opportunities after school.[18] Girls may also be needed at home to engage in domestic chores and sibling care. Another factor underlying some girls' exclusion from education is child labour. According to a study of 16 household-based national child labour surveys, 21.2 per cent of boys and 15 per cent of girls aged 5 to 14, and 45.5 per cent of boys and 30.4 per cent of girls aged 15 to 17, participate in the labour market. If the definition of work is taken to include non-economic activities, girls have higher working rates than boys. Among children aged 5 to 14 years, who perform household chores for 28 hours per week or more, the hourly school attendance rate decreases at a faster pace for girls than boys.[19]

20. Financial incentives targeted at families have been of particular importance in increasing girls' enrolment in schools. Some interventions targeted at both girls and boys to make education more affordable for the poorest, such as the elimination of school fees, school feeding programmes and the distribution of free school uniforms, have increased demand for primary schooling and proved particularly beneficial to girls in lower secondary school.[18] The elimination of school fees, however, can force schools faced with loss of revenue to introduce informal fees by charging parents for textbooks and other teaching and learning supplies.[12]

21. A number of countries in Latin America, the Middle East and Africa have implemented conditional cash transfer programmes which provide cash assistance to mothers or families to ensure the enrolment and retention of girls.[19] The results are, however, mixed in terms of closing the gender gap. An evaluation of the Nicaraguan social safety net programme has found little difference in the impact on enrolment rates for girls and for boys.[20] The Oportunidades programme, formerly known as

[16] Plan International, "Behind the screen: an inside look at gender inequality in Asia", revised edition, 2008, available at http://plan-international.org/files/Asia/publications/behindthescreen.pdf.

[17] Federico Blanco Allais, "Assessing the gender gap: Evidence from SIMPOC surveys" (Geneva, ILO, 2009).

[18] International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, *Enduring Questions Brief*, No. 8, May 2009.

[19] E. Unterhalter et. al., "Gender equality and women and girls' education, 1995-2010: How much is there a space for hope?", paper for UNESCO 15-year review of the Beijing Platform of Action, 2010.

[20] J. A. Maluccio and R. Flores "Impact evaluation of a conditional cash transfer program: the Nicaraguan Red de Proteccion Social", Discussion Paper No. 184 (Washington, D.C., International Food Policy Research Institute, 2004).

Progresa, in Mexico increased the secondary school enrolment rate by 9.2 percentage points for girls and 6.2 percentage points for boys, with little impact on primary school enrolment.[21] A conditional cash transfer programme targeted at female students in the Punjab province of Pakistan was successful in increasing girls' enrolment in grades 6 to 8 with positive spillover effects on boys' enrolment.[22] There is, however, concern that such programmes can reinforce gender divisions of labour and perpetuate gender stereotypes if mothers are expected to take the full responsibility for complying with all the conditions attached to participation in the programmes.[23]

22. Governments have carried out awareness-raising campaigns to convince parents of the importance of girls' education. A number of Governments in West Africa worked with village heads and religious leaders to launch campaigns targeted at parents to communicate the importance of educating daughters.[24] Zambia sensitized communities on the importance of girls' education and provided bursaries to girls. Turkey's "Snowdrops" and "Father, send me to school" campaigns had a significant impact on girls' schooling.

23. Early marriage or early pregnancy can force some girls to drop out of school. Data from demographic and health surveys in 60 countries suggest that 50 per cent of women aged 20-24 are married before the age of 18 in South Asia, 41 per cent in Africa and 25 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean.[25]

24. Measures taken by Governments to reduce dropouts linked to early pregnancy included revision of education codes to allow teenage mothers to return to school.[26] In the United Republic of Tanzania, legal change is taking place, with Sweden's assistance, to allow girls and young women to return to school after childbirth. The Danish University and Property Agency, under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, gives bonuses to universities when students complete their studies within the official duration of the programme, while taking into account childbearing time for female students.

25. Concerns about girls' safety at school, in particular their vulnerability to sexual violence on the way to or within school, can also force parents to withdraw girls from school.[26] Parents of girls in remote rural areas are particularly concerned about their daughters' safety because of the distance to school.[27] Turkey has established boarding schools in villages and small settlements, in particular where girls drop out. In addition, investments in infrastructure such as water, transportation and energy can improve the safety of girls at and on the way to

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[21] T. P. Schultz, "School subsidies for the poor: evaluating the Mexican Progresa poverty program", *Journal of Development Economics*, vol. 74, No. 1 (2004), pp. 199-250. Available at http://ideas.repec.org/ege/wpaper/834.html.

[22] A. Hasan, "Gender-targeted conditional cash transfers: enrollment, spillover effects and instructional quality", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 5257, (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2010).

[23] M. Molyneux, "Change and continuity in social protection in Latin America: mothers at the service of the state" (Geneva, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2007).

[24] M. Buvinic et. al., "Gender shapes adolescence", *Development Outreach*, vol. 9, No. 2 (2007), pp. 12-15.

[25] UNDP, "What will it take to achieve the Millennium Development Goals?: an international assessment" (New York, June 2010).

[26] Plan International, *Because I am a Girl: The State of the World's Girls 2009*, available from http://plan-international.org.

school, as well as significantly reduce girls' burden of unpaid work, such as collection of water and fuel. Belgium has funded several projects, mainly in Morocco and Senegal, to increase access to water and sanitation in rural areas in view of the fact that girls bear the main responsibility for collecting water and may not be sent to school in the absence of sanitary latrines. Djibouti has improved the primary schools by equipping them with water, electricity, latrines, playgrounds and safe spaces.

26. Quotas have also been used to ensure that girls and boys, women and men have equal access to learning opportunities and that resources are distributed in such a way as to narrow the gender gap.[27] For instance, in Zambia, 30 per cent of university admissions slots have been reserved for girls, while both female and male applicants compete for the remaining 70 per cent.

27. Member States promoted girls' access to education through support to the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative and civil society organizations such as the Forum for African Women Educationalists. Norway contributed to work of the United Nations Children's Fund to strengthen primary education, girls' rights and gender equality. Denmark provided DKK 135 million to the Education for All Fast Track Initiative, with a focus on strengthening girls' access to education.

Enhancing quality of education and eliminating gender stereotypes

28. Achieving education for all depends not only on increased access, but also on what girls and boys learn at school. Poor quality of education has emerged as a major concern, particularly in the developing world, as many children leave school without basic literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, girls and women need more than reading, writing and mathematics. They must also develop skills relevant for today's job market, such as critical thinking, teamwork, planning and organizing, communication and leadership.

29. Quality education depends on a number of factors, including school infrastructure, availability of textbooks and learning materials, and competence and training of teachers. Investing in early childhood education can also help to improve subsequent learning achievement. Panama, for instance, targets four and five-year-old children through three separate formal and non-formal programmes, and plans to extend its early-childhood education network in order to reach more, and younger, children.

30. One element that affects the quality of schooling is gender stereotypes. Gender bias in formal curricula and textbooks can contribute to gender segregation in students' career choices. A comparative analysis of studies of three developing countries revealed that, regardless of geographic boundaries or levels of patriarchy, textbooks underrepresented women in words and illustrations and conveyed gender stereotypes about occupational and domestic roles as well as individual attributes and actions.[28] While progress has generally been made in eliminating blatant sexism

[27] UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, "Ensuring equitable lifelong learning opportunities", paper prepared for the Beijing + 15 UNESCO online discussion on gender equality, education and training.

[28] R. L. Blumberg (2007). Gender bias in textbooks: a hidden obstacle on the road to equality in education. Background paper for EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.

from textbooks and curricula, more efforts are needed to increase the portrayal of both women and men in less stereotyped roles at all levels of education.[7]

31. A number of countries, including Greece, Malta, Montenegro, Spain and Turkey, have reviewed and revised school curricula and textbooks to eliminate stereotypes. In some cases, such as in Malaysia, the Ministry of Education provided guidelines to writers and publishers of school textbooks to eliminate gender stereotypes (CEDAW/C/MYS/CO/2). In Brazil, the Special Secretariat on Policies for Women and the Ministry of Education provided criteria for the selection of textbooks for grades one to four. Books not only had to avoid negative stereotypes, but also foster an education based on gender equality (CEDAW/C/BRA/6). In Belgium, the Ministries of Equal Opportunities and of Education have collaborated in the development of a manual to help teachers, inspectors, publishers, authors and education providers detect sexist stereotypes in textbooks. In Ecuador, the National Women's Council gave technical assistance to the Ministry of Education for incorporating a gender and women's human rights focus in education materials for its literacy and basic education programmes.

32. Acknowledging that gender stereotypes can be perpetuated by teachers, a number of countries, including Cambodia, Greece, Grenada and Slovakia, introduced initiatives to sensitize teachers and other educational personnel to gender equality issues. Spain developed an Internet-based education portal as a virtual space for education managers and other stakeholders to share knowledge and experiences of gender-differentiated approaches to education. In Belgium, initial training of primary teachers includes a 30-hour course on gender sensitization. In addition, since 2006, teachers in Belgium have been offered training in gender and sexual diversity with a view to deconstructing stereotypes, introducing pedagogic materials from a gender perspective, testing pedagogic tools for sensitization and promoting neutral pedagogic attitudes. Other initiatives to eliminate gender stereotypes included a project on facilitating equality through education in Malta, which included training seminars on the principles of gender equality and work/life balance targeted at policymakers, teachers and students, as well as general awareness-raising programmes in Jamaica.

33. Both female and male teachers are critical for addressing gender stereotypes by serving as role models for young girls and boys. However, female teachers are overrepresented in lower levels of education and tend to be clustered in urban schools, in particular in developing countries. The global average for female teachers in 2005 was 94 per cent in pre-primary, 62 per cent in primary, 53 per cent in secondary and 41 per cent in tertiary education.[13] Some countries, however, lack female teachers at lower levels of education. In response, Zambia, for instance, requires that 51 per cent of students enrolled in teacher training colleges be female and 49 per cent male, which has helped to raise the number of women teachers, in particular in rural areas. Other countries are attempting to recruit male teachers. The Netherlands tries to make primary teaching more attractive for men, including by raising salaries. In an effort to create role models for boys and to open up new employment opportunities for men, Germany has taken measures to increase the number of male professionals in early childhood education, including through retraining men interested in entering the profession, as well as disseminating information about related initiatives.

34. Measures have also been taken to increase the number of female professors at universities, including by providing financial incentives. Germany launched a "Women Professors" programme which invited universities to submit their equal opportunity plans to receive funding for up to three women professors. Similarly, Belgium established a new system of university funding, which is partly based on increasing the number of female professors, while Switzerland established a target of 25 per cent female professors at universities and provided economic incentives to universities for appointing female professors.

35. Gender stereotypes may be contributing to boys' underachievement in education in some regions, including in terms of performance, retention and participation in tertiary education. A recent report in Sweden has shown that girls receive better grades than boys, and that boys have a greater risk of being diagnosed with behavioural problems requiring remedial intervention. In Grenada, measures to address this issue included public sensitization, support workshops, personal development and anger management training. While there is a risk that the underachievement of boys leads to a reduced focus on girls, it also provides an opportunity for better integration of gender perspectives in education, as illustrated by Belgium's Venus project. While the project's starting point was a concern for boys' performance in secondary school, it identified concrete practices that better motivated both boys and girls to learn.

Non-formal education and training

36. Non-formal training remains an important complement to the formal education system. It can reach out-of-school women and girls, and is particularly important in countries affected by emergencies. According to a survey by the United Kingdom Department for International Development, 30 to 40 per cent of women participants in adult literacy programmes develop higher self-esteem and confidence in contributing to family decisions and participating in local public affairs.[29]

37. Non-formal education is a critical tool for eradicating illiteracy among adult women. Pakistan strengthened the gender dimension of its literacy programmes through a review of national policies and programmes. Research was conducted on the root causes of low literacy among women, an advocacy toolkit on gender mainstreaming in literacy programmes was developed, and policymakers and community leaders were sensitized to the importance of female literacy for national development.[2] Through Turkey's "Mother and girl at school" literacy campaign, the Ministry of National Education, municipalities and non-governmental organizations offered women literacy courses and skills training through vocational and technical schools and institutions. Paraguay conducted gender-sensitive literacy campaigns targeting both women and men in local communities. Djibouti conducted various literacy campaigns focused on women's empowerment, which resulted in around 17,000 women and adolescent girls acquiring basic numeracy and essential reading skills.

[29] United Kingdom Department for International Development, "Adult literacy: an update", DFID practice paper, August 2008.

38. A key weakness of the existing non-formal training programmes is that they are often not based on an assessment of local market opportunities[30] and are offered even in the absence of related jobs in the market. Furthermore, they often remain within the boundaries of gender stereotypes by training girls and women in traditionally female occupations, such as hairstyling or dressmaking.[26]

39. Recognizing this, Belgium supported a vocational training project in Senegal for women, who left school after primary or lower secondary education, or who were illiterate, which offered skills training tailored to the needs and potential of the local labour market. In Cambodia, the post-harvest technology and skills bridging programme for the rural poor provided school dropouts, in particular girls, with intensive courses to complete an equivalent level of grade nine certificates to enable them to enrol in any relevant vocational school. The Ministry of Commerce of China, in collaboration with the United Kingdom Department for International Development, provided technical skills training and capacity-building to 15- to 18-year-old rural girls who had previously dropped out of school in a number of provinces.

40. Information and communication technology has expanded the possibilities for distance education. For example, Paraguay implemented a programme of audiovisual-based literacy training. Distance education must, however, take into account the various constraints that women may face. For example, a project on e-learning and distance education for women living in rural areas in Turkey was successful only after adding face-to-face instruction, childcare services, transport to learning centres and the provision of food to the women and their children.[31]

IV. Women's access to and participation in full employment and decent work

Overview

41. While education has many non-market benefits, it is commonly expected to lead to improved productivity and higher earnings. As countries are progressing towards gender parity in school enrolment, one would expect to see these gains reflected in the labour market. However, while women's labour force participation has increased, it has not done so on the scale expected from improvements made in education. Despite the increase in the share of women in paid employment outside the agricultural sector, female labour force participation was estimated to be 52.6 per cent in 2008, compared with a male participation rate of 77.5 per cent. Among the 20- to 24-year-old population, women continue to lag behind men in labour force participation in all regions, with South Asia recording the greatest gap, namely 82 per cent of men and 27 per cent of women employed or seeking employment.[32]

42. Even in regions with high rates of school attendance for both girls and boys, such as Latin America, Europe, Central and East Asia and the Pacific, labour force

[30] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Youth Report 2007: Young People's Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges* (United Nations publication Sales No. E.07.IV.1).

[31] Commission on the Status of Women, fifty-fourth session, moderator's summary for the panel in preparation for the 2011 session of the Commission.

[32] World Bank, "Equality for women: where do we stand?" (Washington, D.C., 2008).

participation is much lower for women than men.[32] Similarly, even though the Middle East and North Africa region has made significant progress in educational outcomes for girls and women, women's labour force participation remains below 30 per cent.[33]

43. At the same time, the global unemployment rate for women is higher than for men; it was estimated at 7 per cent versus 6.3 per cent in 2009.[34] One third of women between 15 and 24 years old in developing countries are "jobless", that is, they are either not employed and actively seeking work, or out of the labour force and not in school, compared with one fifth of young men.[34] According to a study of a large number of developing countries, being involved in unpaid work or home-based enterprise was an important reason for young women not to enter the labour market.[35]

44. While women's employment opportunities have increased, although not on par with educational gains, the quality of employment has not improved much. Progress towards full employment is not always connected to decent work: women may be entering the labour market, but in jobs that do not guarantee rights to workers, extend social protection or promote social dialogue.

45. As of 2009, 51.2 per cent of female workers were in vulnerable employment, compared with 55.9 per cent 10 years earlier. Even though the share in vulnerable employment is also high for men, at 48.2 per cent, women are more than twice as likely as men to be unpaid contributing family workers.[36] Gender wage gaps persist in all parts of the world and are estimated to range from 3 to 51 per cent, with a global average of 17 per cent.[37] In addition, women are overrepresented in part-time work. In the European Union, for example, 31.1 per cent of women worked part-time compared to 7.9 per cent of men in 2008.[38]

46. As a result of the financial and economic crisis, increases in female unemployment rates exceeded those for males between 2008 and 2009 in some regions, such as South Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, and developed economies.[33] In addition, while the differential impact of the crisis has varied across countries depending on the gender-based job segregation, women often spend more time in both paid and unpaid work to offset the impact on household incomes.[39]

Increasing women's access to the labour market

47. According to the ILO school-to-work transition surveys for several countries, young women find the transition more difficult than young men because of limited access to social networks, information channels and job search mechanisms.[40] In

[33] ILO, *Global Employment Trends* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2010).

[34] E. Katz, "Programs promoting young women's employment: what works?" (October 2008).

[35] J. Fares et al., "How are youth faring in the labor market? Evidence from around the World" (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2006).

[36] ILO, "Women in labour markets: measuring progress and identifying challenges" (Geneva, 2010).

[37] International Trade Union Confederation, "The global gender pay gap" (Brussels, 2008).

[38] European Commission, "Equality between women and men" (Brussels, 2010).

[39] United Nations, *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* (New York, 2009).

[40] ILO, *Youth Employment: Breaking Gender Barriers for Young Women and Men* (2008), available at http://www.ilo.org/.

some contexts, social norms can restrict women's physical mobility or make it unacceptable for them to work.[50] In the Middle East and North Africa region, the transition from school to work is particularly difficult for women owing to limited labour market mobility, a mismatch between skills acquired through education and labour market demands, and legal barriers or cultural norms.[51] In Lebanon, for example, women's limited participation in the labour market is attributed to cultural heritage, prevailing mentality and deep-rooted gender stereotypes. Furthermore, employers in some countries may prefer to hire young men rather than young women.[52]

48. School-to-work transition initiatives therefore are imperative to ensure that gains in girls' education are translated into decent work opportunities for young women. To improve women's transition from school or training to work, Germany used gender-sensitive counselling and placement services, gender-sensitive training courses and gender-sensitive labour market policies in its development assistance programmes.

49. In Latin America, programmes have been successful that take into account the social, economic and institutional context in their design, including through assessment of labour market conditions and non-employment-related challenges faced by adolescent girls and young women.[53] The well-targeted and demand-driven Projoven vocational training project in Peru, for example, successfully promoted young women's employment and their equal access to training in non-traditional skills. It also provided additional stipends to cover childcare.[54]

50. Some programmes, such as the adolescent livelihood programmes in South Asian and African countries, not only focused on enhancing labour market skills, but also combined vocational training with reproductive health and other interventions. As women have less access to social networks for information on jobs, job readiness and job search skills are particularly critical for young women to find and keep jobs and therefore should be included in curricula for higher education and vocational training.

51. A number of countries have taken measures to increase women's access to employment through provision of training programmes, development of tools for stakeholders and provision of incentives to employers. Belarus targeted women through hiring fairs to fill vacant positions, provided vocational training and retraining in fields with greater demand and provided loans to employers to create jobs for women. The Public Employment Service of Denmark, through its specialized unit for gender equality, provided tools to job centres and other stakeholders to ensure equal access for women and men to the labour market. Cyprus has implemented a pilot project on flexible employment arrangements to increase women's participation in the labour market, including through subsidizing the labour cost of women.

52. Initiatives must take into account the obstacles faced by some groups of women, such as older women, women living in rural areas and women from minorities, in accessing training opportunities. Many older women, for instance, need to enhance their skills and develop new ones in order to be able to continue to work. Training programmes should take into account their age-related needs and

[51] World Bank, "Bridging the gap: improving capabilities and expanding opportunities for women in the Middle East and North Africa region" (Washington, D.C., 2010).

constraints. The Magna Carta of Women, the gender equality law of the Philippines, mandates the agriculture department and local government units to ensure the participation of women living in rural areas in training programmes on food production. Peru's *Capacitate* programme for professional training for labour market participation emphasized the inclusion of women in training in agricultural and dairy production and food processing. Denmark has taken initiatives to promote the participation of ethnic minority women in education and the labour market, including an integration programme for all newly arrived immigrants which provides labour market training, and a mentoring network. Canada's Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnerships programme brought together aboriginal community leaders and the private sector, major industry leaders, trade unions and learning institutions to strengthen women's equal participation in training and job retention activities.

53. To support women re-entering the labour market after a career break, there is increasing focus on training programmes and support services. Germany's "Vocational reintegration as a perspective" programme helped women to return to work after a long family-related employment break, including through guidance on transition, creating role models, providing special skills and involving employers and women's partners in supportive measures. The Employment and Training Corporation of Malta offered an "Employment for women" course for women seeking to return to the labour market as well as victims of violence and young single mothers. Spain instituted policies for the recognition and certification of professional competencies based on work experience. This has assisted women in returning to study and work in areas such as dependent care work, child education and hospitality and tourism.

Addressing gender pay gaps and occupational segregation

54. Women's and girls' educational choices and attainment contribute to the gender pay gap and occupational segregation. As education and training decisions are partly based on the availability of labour market opportunities, occupational segregation can negatively impact women's and girls' educational choices and perpetuate gender stereotypes. Women tend to dominate lower-paying sectors such as teaching and care work and to be underrepresented in traditionally "male" fields, for instance, science and engineering. Their predominance in part-time work and low-skilled jobs also contributes to gender wage gaps.

55. Member States have taken actions to address unequal remuneration. Sweden set a target to eliminate gender pay gaps in the public sector by 2010, including through commissioning the Swedish Administrative Development Agency to set up a programme on women's career development in the public sector (CEDAW/C/SR.826). Poland participated in a European Union-level campaign on the existing gender pay gap, using posters, leaflets and equality days in 2010.

56. In recent years, some countries have shifted the focus of their initiatives on eliminating occupational segregation from increasing girls' participation in non-traditional fields to breaking gender stereotypes for both girls and boys. The Netherlands organized research, debates, conferences and school visits during which games were used to encourage girls and boys to make conscious choices about their studies and careers. The German "New paths for boys", a nationwide networking project, aimed to broaden boys' occupational choices, present flexible male gender

roles and strengthen their social skills. Denmark launched initiatives to recruit and retain men in the care sector. The Administration of Employment of Luxembourg supported girls' and boys' days that informed ninth graders about non-typical professions. On girls' day in Switzerland, girls accompanied their fathers or mothers to work all day, while boys talked with men in classrooms about the sharing of responsibilities at home.

Reconciliation of work and family life

57. Despite women's educational gains, their access to employment can be constrained by stereotypical perceptions of men as primary wage earners and women as primary caregivers and secondary earners. The demands on women's care work in some regions are compounded by early marriage and childbearing and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The absence of care services for dependent persons, adequate leave schemes and flexible working arrangements can deter women's participation in the labour market or in full-time work.

58. Policy responses to promote reconciliation of work and family life focused on the redistribution of the burden of unpaid work between women and men, provision of accessible and affordable care services and investments to improve public infrastructure (E/CN.6/2010/2). While policy and legislative interventions that include affordable childcare and maternity, paternity and parental leave provisions are critical to ensure the equitable participation of both women and men in the labour market, they continue to be primarily targeted at women (A/64/162).

59. Outreach and awareness-raising activities, in particular those that highlight the role of fathers in caregiving for children, have been effective in expanding coverage and usage of paternity and parental leaves. Poland's project "Between family and work: reconciliation of women's social and professional roles" consisted of a media campaign, including spots and billboards, books and online publications to change gender stereotypical attitudes.

60. The provision of accessible and affordable care services, including child and elder care, and health services, is also important. Cyprus has developed a network of structures and services to provide quality care services to facilitate reconciliation of work and family life for women and men.

Enhancing women's entrepreneurship

61. Entrepreneurship is another employment option for women, providing them an opportunity where their talents, creativity and innovation can flourish.[42] There is, however, a significant gender gap in new venture creation and business ownership. Men are more likely to be involved in entrepreneurial activity than women, in particular in high-income countries.[43] Women entrepreneurs tend to be concentrated in small and precarious enterprises because of their limited access to and control over resources such as land, credit, technology, information and markets.[43] Education and skills training for women are instrumental in enhancing their entrepreneurship potential, including through increasing their capability to use new

[42] ILO (2009). Gender equality at the heart of decent work. Geneva.

[43] J. E. Allen et al., *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: 2007 Report on Women and Entrepreneurship* (2008), available at www.genconsortium.org.

technologies and boosting the growth potential and sustainability of their businesses.

62. Some Governments have taken initiatives to promote women's entrepreneurship. Denmark has mainstreamed entrepreneurship education into curricula to inspire more girls to become entrepreneurs. In Norway, an action plan to increase entrepreneurship among women aims to raise the proportion of women among new entrepreneurs to at least 40 per cent by 2013. Greece made provisions to allow women entrepreneurs with dependent children or persons with disabilities to claim their house as business property and other relevant expenses as business expense. Nicaragua has offered technical assistance and training in agriculture to small and medium enterprise producers, with 60 per cent of recipients being women producers. The Plurinational State of Bolivia has implemented training in wealth creation, rights and access to capital for indigenous women in agriculture and as handicraft producers.

63. Germany's national agency for women start-ups has served as a central platform that offered information and services for women entrepreneurs. Poland's project "How good to be an enterprising woman" provided women with necessary knowledge of how to start a business, where to seek funds and how to promote the business. The multi-purpose community centres in Turkey provided income-generating and skills training courses to an average of 3,000 women in a year, which led to the establishment of 75 businesses by 121 participants in the last six and a half years. Such projects and training programmes, however, may not be sufficient in some countries to increase women's access to entrepreneurship. Some inheritance and property laws, for example, can discriminate against girls and women and limit their access to productive assets.[44]

V. Conclusions and recommendations

64. Actions taken on education and training at the national and community levels have resulted in substantial gains for women and girls, particularly in relation to access. The progress made with regard to girls' and women's access to and participation in formal and non-formal education, however, has not sufficiently translated into decent employment opportunities for women. There is a need to regularly evaluate the impact of initiatives at national level to determine the most effective way of reducing gender gaps in education. More attention to young women's transition from school to work is needed in order to ensure that gains in education translate into employment opportunities.

65. The Commission on the Status of Women may wish to call upon Governments, the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and other relevant actors, as appropriate, to:

(a) Systematically mainstream a gender perspective in all education and employment policies and programmes, including budgeting processes, and monitor and evaluate the impact on women and men of such policies and programmes, including through the use of tools such as gender audits;

[44] A. Morrison et. al., "Gender equality, poverty, and economic growth", Policy Research Working Paper No. 4349 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2007).

(b) Adopt and/or review and fully implement, in collaboration with all stakeholders, gender-sensitive legislation and policies on education and employment that address the root causes of horizontal and vertical occupational segregation and gender-based wage gaps;

(c) Review gaps and address barriers to the implementation of policies aimed at ensuring full and equal access of women and girls to formal and non-formal education at all levels, including technical and vocational, adult and long-distance education and training, as well as literacy programmes;

(d) Take measures to eliminate inequalities related to age, poverty, geographical location, language, ethnicity, religion and disability affecting women and girls in access to and participation in education at all levels;

(e) Provide incentives for schools and universities to develop gender equality policies, including on human resources issues, curriculum development and the creation of a conducive learning environment for girls and women, boys and men;

(f) Remove economic barriers to girls' education, including by providing financial incentives and eliminating school fees, and through a well-planned and well-managed process that addresses subsequent increases in enrolment and reductions in school income;

(g) Expand social support for girls' schooling, especially at the secondary level, including by targeting community leaders and parents through awareness-raising campaigns;

(h) Improve the safety of girls at and on the way to school, including by providing infrastructure such as transportation, separate toilets and improved lighting, establishing and enforcing sanctions for violence against girls, and conducting violence prevention activities in schools and communities;

(i) Develop and strengthen infrastructure, including alternative energy sources, water and electricity, to reduce the burden of domestic activities and free girls and women to engage in educational or productive activities;

(j) Eliminate gender stereotypes in textbooks and curricula, including by assessing the impact of gender biases on girls and boys and developing gender-sensitive educational material;

(k) Improve the relevance and quality of education at all levels for both girls and boys, including through teacher training, teaching methodologies and curriculum development, and implement programmes to improve achievement for the most disadvantaged learners;

(l) Ensure women's and girls' equal access to technical and vocational training, including apprenticeship, by providing financial incentives, conducting awareness-raising activities, ensuring flexible schedules and gender-sensitive methodologies;

(m) Ensure that educational, training and employment opportunities are available to women and girls who have interrupted their schooling or employment, including through the formal recognition of prior learning and work experience;

(n) Ensure that formal and non-formal education, skills development, vocational training and retraining opportunities available to women meet the demands of the labour market;

(o) Ensure that secondary and tertiary institutions, as well as targeted school-to-work transition programmes, equip women and girls with job readiness and job search skills and provide career guidance;

(p) Remove barriers to women's entrepreneurship by ensuring access to business administration and information technology training, and financial instruments, as well as facilitating networking and information-sharing;

(q) Undertake legislative and administrative reforms in order to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and technologies;

(r) Adopt and enforce the principles of decent work in both the formal and informal sectors, as contained in relevant ILO conventions, including develop and improving gender-responsive social protection schemes, such as social insurance and pension schemes, that meet basic minimum needs throughout the life cycle;

(s) Adopt and implement legislation and policies to promote the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities for both women and men, including through flexibility in working arrangements, paid maternity, paternity, parental and other forms of leave and provision of care facilities;

(t) Encourage and accelerate the development of statistical indicators and data disaggregated by sex and age to inform policymaking on education and employment, and monitor and evaluate the implementation of these recommendations and resulting actions.